



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WASHINGTON'S ENCAMPMENT ON THE NESHAMINY.

BY WILLIAM J. BUCK.

On the Old York Road in Warwick Township, Bucks County, about twenty miles nearly north of Philadelphia, stands a substantial stone dwelling, to the history of which the attention of the writer was attracted some years ago. In it Washington made his head-quarters from the tenth to the twenty-third of August, 1777, and the local traditions and papers relating to the events of those thirteen days are not devoid of interest. The house stands beside the road about one hundred and twenty yards from the northeast end of the present bridge over the Little Neshaminy Creek, at the foot of a long and rather steep elevation known as Carr's Hill; and about half a mile above the village of Hartsville, formerly known as the Cross Roads. I have not ascertained who owned the property when the army encamped near it, but shortly after it was in the possession of Elijah Stinson, then of Reuben P. Ely, and afterwards of Wm. Bothwell, in whose family its title yet remains. In dimensions it is about twenty-five feet by twenty-seven, is two stories high, fronts south, and is elevated eight or nine feet above the present bed of the road. At the time of the Revolution it was one of the best finished houses in the neighborhood. Within its walls many important dispatches were written, and Generals Greene, Lincoln, Stirling, and Lafayette, as well as Pulaski and others, gathered under its roof. The main body of the army was encamped around this house and on the top of the high hill to the north, on ground then owned by two brothers by the name of Wallace.

On the opposite side of the road all orders to the army were posted, and a whipping post was erected for the punishment of offenders.

A short distance east of Hartsville on the Bristol Road,

another considerable body of the army was encamped, on the farm now owned by Major George Jamison. Lord Stirling's division of the army was stationed there, and a tradition survives in the neighborhood, that here General Washington remonstrated with him on account of his convivial habits, which seems to be corroborated by the writings of Lafayette. Opposite this, on the farm now owned by John Ramsey, in Warminster Township, General Conway had his brigade of Pennsylvania troops encamped; and here also cattle were kept for the army. The Neshaminy Presbyterian Church is situated about half a mile further up the stream, in the graveyard of which a number of soldiers were buried who died during the encampment. Only common stones were used to denote their resting places, none of which have inscriptions of any kind. The old church was used as a hospital.

It was on the banks of the Neshaminy that Lafayette first entered the army, and from his memoirs and correspondence we are enabled to obtain some additional information: He says that on the day of his arrival there was a review by Washington, and the men numbered about 11,000, who were ill armed and still worse clothed. The best clad wore hunting shirts made of gray linen. As to their military tactics they were always ranged in two lines, the smallest men in front. In spite of their disadvantages, the soldiers were a fine body of men, and the officers zealous in the cause. "Virtue," he says, "stood in place of science, and each day added both to experience and discipline." He mentions Lord Stirling as more courageous than judicious, General Greene as a man of talents, and General Knox as having created the artillery. He further says, that after the English fleet had disappeared from near the Delaware, the soldiers amused themselves by making jokes at its expense. These, however, ceased when they heard of it being in the Chesapeake.

Count Pulaski also, first entered the army at this place, respecting whom Washington says, "I enclose you a copy of Dr. Franklin's letter, and also of Mr. Deane's, couched in terms equally favorable to the character and military abilities of this gentleman. How he can be provided for, you will be best able

to determine. He takes this from me as an introductory letter at his own request."

Court martials were held on the 12th and 16th, at which Colonel Sheldon presided, and respecting which the following orders were promulgated on the 19th: Edward Wilcox, quartermaster to Captain Dorsey's Troop, for deserting and taking a horse and accoutrements belonging to Colonel Moylan's Regiment, is sentenced to be led round the regiment on horseback with his face towards the horse's tail, and his coat turned wrong side outwards, and then to be discharged from the army. The Commander-in-Chief approves the sentence and orders it to be put into execution immediately.

George Kilpatrick and Charles Martin, sergeants, Lawrence Burne and Enoch Wells, corporals, Daniel McCarty, Patrick Leland, Philip Franklin, Jacob Baker, Thomas Orles, Adam Rex, Frederick Gaines, Daniel Kainking, Christian Longspit, Henry Winer, and Nicholas Walner, privates in Colonel Moylan's Regiment of Light Dragoons, charged with mutiny and desertion, and adjudged worthy of death—the court esteeming the prisoners, except Sergeant Kilpatrick, objects of compassion, and as such recommend them to the Commander-in-Chief, who is pleased to grant them his pardon and also to Sergeant Kilpatrick. At the same time, the prisoners are to consider their crimes of a very atrocious nature, and have by the articles of war subjected themselves to the penalty of death. The remission of their punishment is a signal act of mercy in the Commander-in-Chief, and demands a very great and full return of fidelity, submission, and obedience, in any future military service which he shall assign them. The prisoners are to quit the horse, and enter into the foot service in such corps to which they shall be assigned.

Thomas Farshiers and George House, of Colonel Moylan's Regiment, tried by the same court are found guilty of the charge of mutiny and desertion, but some favorable circumstances appearing in their behalf, they are sentenced to receive twenty-five lashes on their naked backs. The Commander-in-Chief remits the penalty of whipping, and they are to be disposed of in the foot service.

Amongst the officers at the Neshaminy encampment may also be mentioned Generals Stephen, Lincoln, and Muhlenberg, Col. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Colonels Bland, Baylor, Sheldon, and Moylan, who commanded four regiments of horse. The latter officer had in charge the Fourth Regiment of Pennsylvania Light Dragoons, a corps that saw considerable service during the war.

It appears by Washington's correspondence with Congress that as early as July 25th he had ascertained that the British fleet in the harbor of New York was on the eve of sailing with a powerful force for some destination unknown. He was then sixteen miles from Morristown, New Jersey, and believing that the enemy were bound for the southward, and very probably Philadelphia, set the army in motion for the river Delaware. On the 28th he arrived at Coryell's Ferry, now Lambertsville, with General Greene's division, where he halted for further news. On the 31st his entire command had crossed the Delaware, and on that evening and the following day had arrived near Germantown, where they awaited further tidings.

Under date of "head-quarters, camp near Germantown, August 9, 1777," Washington writes: "The disappearance of the enemy's fleet for so many days rendering it rather improbable that they will again return, I have thought it advisable to remove the army back to Coryell's, where it will be near enough to succor Philadelphia, should the enemy, contrary to appearances, still make that the object of their next operation; and will be so much the more conveniently situated to proceed to the northward, should the event of the present ambiguous and perplexing situation of things call them that way. I was the more inclined to this step, as the nearness of the army to the city—besides other disadvantages—afforded a temptation, both to officers and men, to indulge themselves in licenses inconsistent with discipline and order, and consequently of an injurious tendency."

On "Sunday evening, August 10th, at 9 o'clock," he writes to the President of Congress: "I this minute received your favor of this afternoon, transmitting intelligence that a fleet

was seen off Sinapuxent on the 7th instant. I was about three miles eastward of the Billet tavern, on the road leading to Coryell's Ferry, when the express arrived. The troops are encamped near the road, where they will remain till I have further accounts respecting the fleet, which you will be pleased to forward to me by the earliest conveyance after they come to hand." The Sinapuxent Inlet spoken of is nearly fifty miles south of the capes of Delaware Bay.

Respecting this movement, General Greene writes to his brother from the "Camp at the Cross Roads," as he calls the encampment, as follows: "We have been in and about the city of Philadelphia for near a fortnight past, ignorant of General Howe's destination. I hope it will not be against New England, but I have my fears. We were marching towards Coryell's Ferry from the city, expecting the fleet was gone eastwardly, when, by an express from the President of Congress, last night, we learned that the fleet are bound westwardly. I wish it were true." On the 14th he expresses himself further on the matter to General Varnum: "I am totally ignorant yet. This manœuvre of General Howe is so strange and unaccountable that it exceeds all conjecture. Our position in the Jerseys was calculated to cover the North River and Philadelphia, and afford protection to the State of New Jersey, but the cry was so great for the salvation of Philadelphia that the General was prevailed upon to leave Coryell's Ferry, contrary to his judgment, and march down to the city, and I expect to have our labors for our pains. We are now within about twenty miles of the city, waiting to get better information."

From a letter of the 15th, sent by General Conway to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, we learn that his four regiments were very weak, one numbering two hundred men, and the other three averaging one hundred and sixty men each. In a letter to the same on the 17th, he writes: "I have heard that you had resolved to send seven hundred and fifty men to the Northern Army. I must own to you that this resolve seems to me to be nothing else than wasting men in a most wanton manner, and at a time when men are so

hard to be gott. It seems clear to every man in the continent this day, that Philadelphia is the enemy's chief object, he certainly means to visit that place, and will attempt it before this campaign is over. I find that your troops make up the strong half of this army, and although your regiments are not where they should or might be, yet, they seem to me beyond the others. I am sure you could make up an army able to stop Mr. Howe's progress; this must be your chief care; reinforce your regiments, and do not deprive yourselves of men which you certainly will want before it is long." Here is certainly a high compliment paid to Pennsylvania; though asking for more soldiers, he makes the confession that those already here from that State "make up the strong half of this army."

On the 17th, General Greene wrote to General Varnum, that "Our situation is not a little awkward—buried in the country, out of hearing of the enemy. His excellency is exceedingly impatient; but it is said, if Philadelphia is lost, all, all is ruined. It is a great object to be sure, but not of that great magnitude that it claims in the measure of the American police. Rest assured we shall not remain idle long."

Washington the same day despatched Lafayette from Neshaminy with a letter to Congress, in which he says that "Contrary to my wishes, but from the necessity of the case, I ordered Colonel Morgan to march immediately with his corps as an additional support. I hope they will be of material service, particularly in opposing the savage part of General Burgoyne's force." To General Putnam the day previous he wrote: "I have determined to send up Colonel Morgan's corps of riflemen, who will fight them in their own way. They will march from Trenton to-morrow morning, and reach Peekskill with all expedition. You will please to have sloops ready to transport them, and provisions laid in, and that they may not wait a moment. The corps consists of five hundred men." "From an apprehension of the Indian mode of fighting," Washington wrote to Gates on the 20th, "I have despatched Colonel Morgan with his corps of riflemen to your assistance, and presume they will be with you in

eight days from this date. This corps I have great dependence on, and have no doubt but they will be exceedingly useful as a check given to the savages, and keeping them within proper bounds, will prevent General Burgoyne from getting intelligence as formerly, and animate your other troops from a sense of their being more on an equality with the enemy."

The 21st must have been a day of doubt and anxiety in the American camp. "From the time that has elapsed," writes Washington to Congress, "since General Howe departed from the Capes of Delaware, there is the strongest reason to conclude that he is going far either to the eastward or southward, and with a design to execute some determined plan." Reasoning thus, he called a council of his general officers, at which Lafayette first took his place as Major-General. After a careful consideration of the subject, it was unanimously concluded: "First, that the enemy had most probably sailed for Charleston; second, that it was not expedient for the army to march southward, as it could not possibly arrive in time to afford succour; thirdly, that the army should move immediately towards the North River." The decision of the board of officers was forwarded to Congress for their approval by the Commander-in-chief, who, in his letter to that body, said: "That I may not appear inconsistent, to advise and to act before I obtain an opinion, I beg leave to mention that I shall move the army to the Delaware to-morrow morning, to change their ground at any rate, as their present encampment begins to be disagreeable, and would injure their health in a short time. Our forage also begins to grow scarce here." Col. Hamilton was sent to carry these resolves to Congress and bring back their opinion. "By three o'clock the active young aid-de-camp" entered the hall of Congress with Washington's dispatches; after reading these Congress adjourned for two hours.

On the morning of the 21st word had been received in Philadelphia that the British fleet of upwards of one hundred sail had been seen on the night of the 14th inst., standing in between the Capes of Chesapeake Bay. This intelligence had been forwarded to Washington by the President

of Congress, but the bearer of it doubtless passed Hamilton on the way.

As no further news of the fleet had been received during the day, Congress, upon assembling after its temporary adjournment, "*Resolved*, That Congress approve the plan of marching the army towards Hudson River, and that General Washington act as circumstances require." The news of the fleet which President Hancock had sent to Washington, had awakened in his mind that caution which so strongly marked his character, and without awaiting the return of Hamilton he wrote at once to Congress: "I am this moment honored with yours of this morning, containing several pieces of intelligence of the fleet's having been seen off the Capes of Virginia on the 15th inst. I shall, in consequence, halt upon my present ground till I hear something further."

This season of suspense ended on the morning of the 22d, when information arrived at Philadelphia that the enemy's fleet had entered Chesapeake Bay. As soon as this news reached camp on the Neshaminy the greatest activity prevailed. Gen. Nash was ordered to embark his brigade and Colonel Proctor's corps of artillery, if vessels could be procured for the purpose, and proceed to Chester; or, if vessels could not be provided, to hasten towards that place by land with all possible speed. Gen. Sullivan, with his division which was stationed at Hanover, N. J., was directed to join the main army, and all the troops were ordered to be in readiness to march at an early hour on the morning of the 23d. In the midst of the excitement which must have existed on the 22d, news was received of the victory gained by Gen. Stark at Bennington. The following extracts are taken from an order announcing the event to the army, which was posted at the roadside:—

"The Commander-in-chief has the happiness to inform the army of the signal victory obtained to the northward. A part of General Burgoyne's army, about 1500 in number, were detached towards New Hampshire, and advanced with a design to possess themselves of Bennington. Brigadier-Gen. Stark, of the State of New Hampshire, with 2000 men,

mostly militia, attacked them. Our troops behaved in a very brave and heroic manner. They pushed the enemy from one work to another, thrown up on advantageous ground, and from different posts, with spirit and fortitude, until they gained a complete victory over them."

On the morning of the 23d the army moved down the Old York Road, Greene's division in the advance, followed by that of Stephen. After a march of about sixteen miles, it arrived at Germantown, at the lower end of which, at Stenton, the former residence of James Logan, Washington made his head-quarters. On the day the army left its encampment on the Neshaminy, Washington wrote to Congress that he would march the army through Philadelphia, as his officers were of the opinion that it might "have some influence on the minds of the disaffected there." From Stenton the orders respecting the march through Philadelphia were issued. They are minute in every particular, as the following extracts will show: "The army is to march in one column through the city of Philadelphia, going in at and marching down Front Street to Chestnut, and up Chestnut to the common."

The order of the divisions, the positions of the horse and artillery, and the spaces between them were all prescribed.

"It is expected that every officer, without exception, will keep his post in passing through the city, and under no pretence whatever leave it; and if any soldier shall dare to leave his place he shall receive thirty-nine lashes at the first halting-place afterwards." The officers were instructed "to prevent the people from pressing on the troops."

"That the line of march through the city may be as little encumbered as possible, only one ammunition wagon is to attend the field-piece of each brigade and every artillery park. All the rest of the baggage-wagons and spare horses are to file off to the right, to avoid the city entirely, and move on to the bridge at the middle ferry, and there halt, but not so far as to impede the march of the troops by preventing their passing them."

"Not a woman belonging to the army is to be seen with the troops on their march through the city."

"The soldiers will go to rest early this evening, as the general expects the whole line to be on the march at the hour appointed" (4 A. M.).

"The drums and fifes of each brigade are to be collected in the centre of it, and a tune for the quick-step played, but with such moderation that the men may step to it with ease, and without *dancing* along or totally disregarding the music, as has been too often the case."

"The men are to be excused from carrying their camp kettles to-morrow."

Crowds of citizens watched the march of the troops through Philadelphia on Sunday morning, August the 24th, 1777. Washington, with Lafayette at his side, rode at the head of the column. It had rained early in the day, and an eye-witness feared "that it would spoil the show and wet the army." To give some uniformity to their appearance, the men wore sprigs of green in their hats. One who saw them wrote: "Our soldiers have not yet quite the air of soldiers. They don't step exactly in time. They don't hold up their heads quite erect, nor turn out their toes so exactly as they ought. They don't all of them cock their hats, and such as do, don't all wear them the same way;" but in the eyes of the writer¹ the spectacle was fine, and inspired confidence. On the evening of the 25th the army had arrived at Wilmington, and on the 11th of September they engaged the enemy at Brandywine.

¹ John Adams.